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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1655

INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001160

SIPDIS

HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

C O R R E C T E D   C O P Y (TEST PARA 2)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/18/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL RS GG VE

SUBJECT: BRV BLAMES U.S. FOR GEORGIA CONFLICT

REF: A. CARACAS 001024

1B. CARACAS 000625

1C. CARACAS 000233

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ,  
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (SBU) The BRV Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued an August 14 press release asserting that the United States "planned, prepared, and ordered" the Georgian military offensive against the break-away region of South Ossetia. The statement continued, "The international community was once again witness to the policy of destabilization and incitement to violence that the American empire practices around the world." The BRV statement goes on to absolve Russia of all blame and declare it a force for peace in the region. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez called Georgian President a U.S. "puppet," and said the Russians, "did what they had to do," on August 17 in his weekly television show, "Alo, Presidente."

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COMMENT  
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12. (C) The BRV frequently levels preposterous charges against the United States for domestic and international problems. The BRV was slow to react this time, but the statement is consistent with the growing ties between Russia and Venezuela. Over the last several years, the BRV has inked arms deals with Russia reportedly for some USD 3-4 billion (Ref A). Chavez also recently returned from a trip to Russia, where he was reported to have said Russian bases would be welcome in Venezuela (Note: BRV officials quickly 'clarified' Chavez' remarks and denied such an offer had been made. End note.) In the August 17 edition of "Alo, Presidente," Chavez said Russia intended to send naval ships to the Caribbean Sea and that the ships would be received in Venezuela.

13. (C) The BRV's position on the Russia - Georgia conflict appears to derive entirely from Venezuela's increasingly close relationship with Russia. The BRV opposed recognition of an independent Kosovo while again strongly backing Russia.

In a February 21, 2008 speech, Chavez declared that Kosovar independence was, "a plan by the Empire (read: the U.S.) to weaken the governments of the world (Ref C)." Chavez also strongly opposes the autonomy movement in the Santa Cruz region of Bolivia and has accused the United States of backing secessionist efforts in Venezuela's oil-rich state of Zulia (Ref B).

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